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DEMOCRATS: Steel and Velvet

In the afterglow of his convention triumph, Jimmy Carter and his campaign staff gathered back at Plains, Ga., to regroup for the big push ahead. Carter accepted by long-distance telephone the endorsement of AFL-CIO chief George Meany, and his top aides met with running mate Walter Mondale to discuss a smooth meshing of staffs and the first phase of the fall campaign.

In a little-noticed press conference early in the week—it was overshadowed by the Viking landing on Mars—Carter was sharply critical of President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. Had he been in Ford's place, Carter declared, he would have pardoned Nixon only after the ex-President's "inevitable conviction" in an "open trial." He did not suspect "a secret deal" between Ford and Nixon, Carter said, but he did note that Ford "was very deeply indebted to President Nixon for choosing him to be the future President." Would Mondale continue to invoke the pardon against Ford, despite Carter's own earlier repudiation of it as a campaign issue? "I don't know," Carter replied, and when reporters suggested that he was already exploiting it indirectly, the nominee grew testy. "I've never raised the question of the pardon at all myself," he snapped. "When you ask me a question about the pardon and then criticize me for answering the question, now that's a little improper."

Carter's only excursion outside Plains was a quick, seven-hour trip to New York, where he hurdled an airport fence to glad-hand potential voters, met magazine editors and local labor leaders and dined with 52 blue-chip business executives at a private lunch at the exclusive 21 Club restaurant. Switching from populist to peanut tycoon, Carter identified himself as a businessman who had succeeded within the free enterprise system and "never did have an inclination for government to dominate business." He toned down talk of redistributing the tax burden, promising instead that "any substantive change" would come only after "at least a full year of very careful analysis." He said that he favored the retention of tax credits for U.S.-based multinationals that pay taxes overseas, although he did oppose tax deferrals on those companies' overseas profits. Carter's messmates emerged warily supportive. "I think he's a steel trap in velvet," said Lever Bros. president Thomas Carroll, but "he's an attractive guy."

Bouffant: Another 21 patron that afternoon was Faye West, owner of Faye's Bar-B-Q Villa in Americus, Ga., and victualer to the hordes of press and Secret Service agents who regularly descend on nearby Plains. When reporters learned that West had never traveled north of Atlanta or taken a plane anywhere, they enlisted her on the nonexistent "Plains Weekly News," woke up a hairdresser to style her bouffant hair-do at 1:30 a.m. and took her off on a buswoman's holiday at 21. The menu was the same presented to Carter: gazpacho and 21's \$8.50 "special," hamburger and string beans. "I would charge \$2.95 for it, but I would serve a baked potato and salad with it," West observed. "Of course, the overhead must be pretty high here."

Carter's aides meanwhile prepared for the forthcoming campaign. From Atlanta, campaign director Hamilton Jordan phoned party chairman Robert Strauss to discuss a national Democratic steering

committee with representatives from labor, the Congressional Black Caucus, the mayors and other groups. He and other staffers then headed out to a Hilton Head, S.C., strategy session with Mondale—fresh from a Minnesota vacation—and his aides, who, in a honeymoon mood, readily agreed to be folded into Jordan's Atlanta operation. Joked Carter aide Landon Butler, "We've been deferring to each other so much we may never get off the ground."

Agenda: That seemed unlikely. Carter has already begun to hire new help. NEWSWEEK learned that he has signed on Foreign Policy magazine editor Richard Holbrooke to coordinate foreign and defense issues, and liberal Harvard professor Stanley Surrey to draw up a tax program, and the agenda for this week was full. Carter and Mondale will spend four afternoon sessions with experts on economic policy and the budget, foreign and defense policy and national security—the last a briefing to be conducted by CIA chief George Bush rather than a State Department topsider, as is traditional. This departure, explained issues man Stu Eizenstat, was because Carter "thought he was more likely to get an objective appraisal" from the CIA.

More briefings would follow, in governmental reorganization, social programs and tax reform. But class would be recessed at the end of the week, Mondale returning to the Senate, Carter to the privacy of Plains—both men to tie up loose ends before the long stretch to November.

—SANDRA SALMANS with JAMES DOYLE in Plains, Ga., and
PHYLLIS MALAMUD in New York